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Friendly Remarks

ON

A SERMON

Lately Preach'd at *Braintree*, 3d. Parish,
and now Published to the World by
the Rev^d. Mr. *Porter* of *Bridgwater*;
from those Words in ISAIAH, 64. 6.
---*All our Righteousnesses are as filthy
Rags.*

In a LETTER to the *Author*,

To be

Communicated to his *Attestators*.

By *Lemuel Briant*, A. M.

And Pastor of the first Church in *Braintree*.

---Turning the Grace of GOD into Lasciviousness.---St. JUDE.
---Of this Sort are they which creep into Houses, and lead captive
filly Women laden with Sins, led away with divers Lusts.
Whose Mouths must be stopped.---St. PAUL.

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Street, opposite to Dr. SEWALL's Meeting-House. 1750.





A

LETTER, &c.



Rev. Sir,



OUR Sermon on *Isaiah* 64. 6. preached at the 3^d. Parish in *Brain-tree* the 25th. of last *December*, and since publish'd to the World under the Patronage of *five worthy Divines*, has put me upon writing the following Letter, which I venture abroad without the Trouble to ride after *Attestators*; being perswaded of the Truth of what a venerable Minister in these Churches observed to you, when invited to usher your Performance into the World with a recommendatory Preface, *That it carry it's own Force with it.* And I trust you will not think it impertinent in me to undertake the Office of a Remarker on your *Elaborate, Orthodox,*

thodox, well attested Preachment, since 'tis so
 pressly levelled against a late printed Discourse
 mine on the same Text, and delivered as near
 Parish as perhaps you could readily find a Pul
 open for you.

WHAT your design was in favouring *Br*
tree with this Specimen of *the good old Calvinist*
Way of Preaching, (tho', as I shall shew in the
 Sequel, not altogether so *Calvinistical* as perha
 you imagined) your design in it, I say, I prete
 not to determine, having not as yet arrived to the
 Gift of Discerning Spirits. I charitably hope
 was well meant, to confirm that good People
 whom it was preach'd, in *Soul humbling and Ch*
exalting Doctrines. But since you yourself
 knowledge there is a *great deal* of Wickedne
 cleaving to the *best* performances of the *very*
 Men on Earth, you will forgive me if I shou
 say 'tis not impossible that there might
 some *little* Design in the Time of it springing fr
 the old and not from the new Man in you,
 make an impresson on my People to the disadv
 tage of their unworthy Pastor. And if there w
 (which I am so far from determining, that I o
 suppose it possible) it will be but a friendly Off
 in me to inform you what success your Labo
 have met with.

AND truly, (Mr. Porter,) I rejoice that I
 tell you. — Neither the *Force of your reasoni*
 nor the *Fervency of your Brother Eaton's Prayer*
 nor yet (I would further add if I tho't my Bo
 nefs could hope for Pardon ;) *the Character*

Influen

fluence which your Attestators have *this* Way :
either of these, I say, has as yet procured my
mission. But notwithstanding all you have
, (or I believe can say,) notwithstanding the
duous Endeavours of several *warm* Gentlemen
Discord among Brethren, which the Scrip-
e says is an *Abomination to the Lord* : We have
yet a pretty considerable Degree of what *we* call
Christian Love and Union amongst us. You and
the others perhaps will give it no better a Name
than that of *curst Peace* ; which dreadful Curse
the Churches have of late years bid fair to be
covered from.

I acknowledge I should not have the greatest
union of the Union that at present subsists a-
mongst us, and which this little Flock commit-
to my Care (to their eternal Honour be it
spoken) have been so remarkable for all along
these divided distracted Times, had we any better
reason than the rash Censures of others, to con-
side it was founded only in Ignorance and Car-
Security.

BUT if we are as ignorant, blind and stupid a
people as some are pleased to represent us, (who
perhaps would be full as well employed in mend-
themselves as in speaking Evil of their Neigh-
bours) yet I desire to bless God, we have this
useful symptom still left upon us, that we are
desirous to know the Truth. And not only so,
'tis the Disposition of my Charge to seek for
in the holy Scriptures without any slavish at-
tachment to humane Schemes.

INDEED

INDEED it must be acknowledged with Gratitude, that there has of late Years been a markable *Out-pouring* of the good old *Ber* Spirit; and the Perils, that in Times of Ignorance and implicit believing have attended Freedom of Plainness of Speech (which is an essential Branch of that Holiness that becomes God's House forever) are very considerably abated.

FIRMLY believing this, and that no Truth ever suffer by Examination, I venture (*Dear Sir*) to Oppose *so mighty, so well attested* an Authority. And what I have to say to yourself I shall digress into the following order.

1st. I will show how far in fact you Oppose me in your Sermon, whatever you aimed to do in the Time of preaching and publishing it.

2^{ly}. I will particularly consider the several Arguments you use to Support this your Opposition and point out to you the weakness and insufficiency of them to this Purpose.

3^{ly}. I will show that so far as you have been in Controversy with me, you equally oppose Calamy himself. Upon the Truth of which, you will allow me the Liberty to expostulate a little with yourself, and Rev. Attestators, as to the Cry that has raised from the supposed Abuse of this Treatise about the Growth of Arminianism.

1st. I am to show how far in Fact you oppose me in your Sermon, &c.---And here, One word

apt to think by your running Title, and by the
 (tho' I hope groundless) Cry you make
 about Religion's dying with the Fathers for want
 of proper Persons to supply their Places, as well as
 innumerable other broad Hints in your Sermon,
 that it was the *Bible* itself that was struck at by
 some unfound and unserious; by some bold, grace-
 less young Heretick. But upon comparing Notes,
 I believe it will be found that you have in fact no
 controversy with me, only as to the Sense and
 Design of One single Passage in this Book : And
 that is those Words, in *Isaiah* 64. 6.---*All our*
righteousnesses are as filthy Rags.---I endeavour to
 shew that the Prophet is not speaking of the Vir-
 tues of *real* good Men, and branding *true* Righte-
 ousness with the odious Character of *filthy Rags* ;
 but only describing and lamenting the general
 want of it. Mr. *Porter* says nay; This is not the
 Sense and Design of the Prophet in the Passage
 under Consideration, but that the Text is rack'd,
 and a Sense extorted from it that it was never wil-
 ling to speak ; that it intends not the *Hypocritical*
performances of wicked Men, but the *best* Virtues
 of the *best* Men, of which *filthy Rags* is a very fit
 resemblance.

THIS I take to be the true state of the Point in
 dispute. And consequently all your after-Dis-
 course, every Thing you have advanced relating to
 some other controverted Points in Divinity which
 you take occasion to speak of in the prosecution of
 this Subject, I have at present nothing to do with,
 nor could you from any Thing delivered in my
 Sermon with the least Colour of reason pretend to

level your spiritual Artillery against me. If you aimed at me, in that Fire of Zeal about substituting our *personal*, in the Room of Christ's *surety*, *Righteousness*, you have certainly miss'd your Mark, and must charge again if you design to do Execution. If you tho't I had taught that we are perfect Righteous; that we are as Righteous as the Angels in Heaven; or what is worse still, that our Righteousness deserves to be compared with the Infinite Purity of the divine Nature, or finally that we can merit Heaven by it; If these were your Thoughts I say, you have mistaken the Man, and are fighting only with your own Shadow.

I challenge you, or any one, or all of you Attestators, to point out a single Passage in my Sermon where the Doctrine of Justification by the *merit* of Man's *personal* Righteousness is asserted, or from whence it can by good and necessary Consequence be inferred. All I contend for, in the whole Point I have in View throughout the whole Discourse (I say again) is only to show that the Prophet did not design to brand the Vertues of *real* good Men with this odious Character of *filthy Rags*, but is speaking in the Terms of the Performances of quite a different set of People. So far am I from teaching any thing about the *merit* of them, that I say expressly (Page 29th.) *Forgiveness of Sin and final acceptance with the Father is thro' the Merits of the Son.* And is there any thing contradictory or inconsistent in all this? Can there be no Degree of Purity in Men, and this Purity held not to be *filthiness*, without supposing *personal* Righteousness

be the *Meritorious* Cause of our Justification. I confess I never yet saw (before Mr. *Porter* and Company shewed us) the Absurdity and Blasphemy, the Popery and Arminiasm of believing *Purity to be Purity, and good Works to be good Works.* But I always tho't that so far as any Man is pure, (let it be in a greater or lesser Degree) he is not filthy. Nor can I see what end will answer in carrying on a *glorious Work* of reformation in the Land to make personal Goodness of no Account, and to load it with the most opprobrious Language, because we an't so perfect in the Practice of it, as some other superiour Beings in the Universe. God don't despise the Day of small things, but represents himself as rejoycing in the Beginning and most imperfect Degrees of true Goodness in his Creatures. Why then should *Christ's Ambassadors* set at nought this Ornament of great Price in God's sight ? If there is a mixture of Wickedness (as undoubtedly there is) in the best Men on Earth, that ought to be called Wickedness, and put far away from us ; but so far as they are pure and holy, for my part I see no Reason why they should not be called so, and from the excellency of the thing, be encouraged to cultivate this Divine Temper in their Souls. *Woe unto him that calls evil good, and good evil.*

BUT all this will not do, you still insist upon it, that those Divine Vertues which constitute the Image of God, are in his sight no better than *filthy Rags*, and that it was the Design of the Prophet in particular, in the Passage under Consideration to represent them as such. But as saying and pro-

ving differ as much as saying and doing, I will presume as was proposed, (2^{ly}.) To Examine the several Arguments you use to support your opposite Sense of the Text, and point out to you the weakness and insufficiency of them to the Purpose.

You say you could easily make out what you advance relating to the Sense and Design of the Prophet in the Text, by Arguments drawn from the Context and other Parts of *Isaiah's* Prophecy. Strange to me! when 'twas so easy, you had not tried what you could do this way; especially when you yourself say (Pag. 3.) " Some in the Explication of this professed Rule (*meaning the Bible*) dont duly consider the Text and Context, the Scope and Design of the inspired Penman, to find the genuine meaning of the Passage under Consideration, &c. " Pray Sir, how can you tell who the Prophet is here speaking of, and what Character he is drawing, unless you consider the whole run of his Discourse. You won't, I trust pretend that by your *inward* Illumination you can certainly tell the meaning of an Author in an broken Sentence picked out of his Writings, without taking into Consideration other parts of his Discourse, upon which the right understanding of it essentially depends. Truly, Mr. Porter, your passing over the Context and other parts of the Book so slightly, when you were professedly settling the Sense of a few dependant Words in it, and when this was the only possible way to cast a true Light upon your Subject, is not with me the most indubitable Evidence that you tho't the

Consideration

Consideration of these Things would serve your present turn.

BUT you say there is no need of this, since the Text it self without going any further, furnishes you with Arguments sufficient for your purpose. " It may be so. But you wont take it amiss if I presume to examine your Arguments a little before I believe it. Your

1st Argument is taken from the Word *Righteousnesses*. And what you say here may be thrown into this Form. If the Word *Righteousness* or *Righteousnesses* is never in Scripture used for the *Hypocritical Performances* of wicked Men, but to denote something truly good and excellent; then we may infer that the latter and not the former is intended in the Text ---- I acknowledge there would be something of an Argument here, if your *Hypothesis* could be maintained. But that it cannot is no hard Task to prove. The Case in short is so plain that I have been astonished (as well as many others) that your *Supervisor*, or some of your *Reverend Attestators* had not counselled you better, (as young Men I know need Advice) than to let such an Argument as this appear in Publick. What! is there no Place, from the Beginning of *Genesis* to the End of *Revelation* where the Term *Righteousness* is applied to the *Hypocritical Performances* of wicked Men? Strange if you should not know better than this! Don't we read in this Book, of Men that *trust to their own Righteousness*; that *go about to establish a Righteousness of their own*; that *turn away from their Righteousness*;

teousness; that only *appear Righteous before Men*. And Mr. Porter I hope don't think that they are truly Righteous who *trust to and go about to establish a Righteousness of their own* ----- You can't be so *Heretical* as to think when a Man is truly Righteous, he can ever *turn from it*--- You won't I am perswaded, when you think upon it, pretend to prove that one who *only appears* Righteous before Men, is really so in the sight of God. But not to multiply Instances, What think you (good Sir) of the Righteousness of the *Scribes and Pharisees*? Was it Hypocritical, or was it true and sincere? You can't affirm the latter, because Christ himself says, *unless ours exceed it we shall in no Case enter into the Kingdom of God*. Upon Supposition it was true and genuine, if our Righteousness equalled theirs, we might hope to see the Kingdom of God. So that this necessity of exceeding it, plainly demonstrates some essential defect in it. Besides, it is evident from their whole History in the Gospel that tho' they had a Righteousness, (such a one as it was) tho' they made a great shew of Devotion and were infinitely nice and precise in their Ways yet that in common Life and Conversation they were Arrant Rogues and Hypocrites; that it was not only an *Imputed* Righteousness that they wanted, but a great deal more *Personal* Goodness than at present they were possessed of. It can be tho't they were such perfect Moralists as some have represented them, when our Saviour himself says, *they neglected the weightier Matters of the Law*, such as *Judgment, Mercy and Fidelity*. They were indeed very famous for cutting up anything their Herbs, and for a pretence

any and long *Prayers*: But at the same Time as famous for devouring Widows Houses. In short, their whole Religion was turned into an engine of Knavery ----- All their sanctified primace was only a plausible Covert for their spiritual Roguery. And it was undoubtedly upon this account that our Saviour thus disparages *their* righteousness, and recommends a much better to his Followers. And why may'nt we suppose the prophet *Isaiah* for the same Reason speaks of the Righteousness of their Predecessors (*who were very much like them*) in the diminutive Language of our Text. Thus much before may be fairly gathered from this Passage in our Saviour's Sermon, that there is at least one Place in Scripture where the Term *Righteousness* is applied to the *Hypocritical Performances* of wicked Men. And this alone (since you say there is none) is sufficient to overthrow your *first* Argument. And so let us go on to your *second* and see if that has any Thing more solid in it. This is taken from the Word *all*, in the Text. And for Substance (if I rightly understand you) may be fairly and fully express'd in this Form. If the Prophet speaks of *all*, i. e. of every individual in the Jewish Church, and there were some real good Men in it, then in this Character he must include their Righteousness: but the Term *all* is here to be understood in this unlimited Sense, &c.

HERE again I am afraid your *Hypothesis* will fail you, relating to the strict and literal *universality* of the Term *all*. In the 1st Place (*Dear Sir*) suffer me to query with you a little, how you
come

come to fix such an unlimited Sense on the Term *all* in this Text, when you yourself will acknowledge, that in many other Places of holy Scripture 'tis so far from intending *Universality*, that it does not comprehend even the *Majority*, only a few particular Persons. Thus when we read of Christ's dying, of his giving his Life a Ransom for *all*, of his tasting of Death for *every* Man (which Language is at least as universal as this in our Text) you know very well that *all* and *every* Man does not intend (according to the Letter) *all* and *every* Man : But must be construed *agreeable to the Analogy of Faith*, as meaning only *a few*.

I know it will not follow from hence that it is to be taken so in this Place, in particular. But from the abovementioned Examples it appears, to you I hope at least, that it *may be* upon Occasion thus Restrained. And there is this further Consideration that will perhaps render it not only *possible*, but also pretty probable, that it was not (strictly speaking) a universal, but only a general Character the Prophet is here drawing ; that this is perfectly agreeable to the prophetick Stile, and many Instances of the same Nature may easily be produced from the Writings of these *holy Men* of old. Thus *Moses* describing the Wickedness of the old World, says in *Gen. 6. 12.* *ALL* Flesh *had corrupted his Way on Earth.* But this Account cannot strictly speaking comprehend *all* the Men that were then on the Earth, for there is at the same Time an expresse Exemption of *Noah* who is said to be *a Just Man, perfect in his Generation*.

tion, and one that walked with God. And therefore we read of his finding Grace in the eyes of the Lord, and being with his House saved from the fatal Deluge. And so again; in the Prophet *Jeremiah's* Day on Earth, the Almighty challenges them to find so much as a Man that was truly good in *Jerusalem*. And yet we can't suppose they were *all* to a Man, vicious and Ungodly; but that they were generally so, and considered in a National View verily guilty before God. But not to enlarge in so plain a Case; much to the same Purpose are those Words in the 14th Psalm 3d Ver. *They are ALL gone aside, they are altogether become filthy, there is NONE that doeth good, no not ONE*. Whatever time of prevailing Corruption the sacred Writer here alludes to, no doubt there was then a Remnant according to the Election of Grace, that truly feared God. All therefore that can be intended in the Passage is, that Vice was Rampant and nearly Epidemical. And why might we not (if Mr. *Porter* had not forbid it) thus have understood the Prophet in our Text? And what if we should after all, thus understand him, since there are so many particular Places in Scripture to countenance the Construction.

ONE thing further I will mention while I think of it; and that is, if it was every individual in the Jewish Church to whom the Prophet applies the Character in the Text, his Confession I humbly apprehend would not be very consistent in Mr. *Porter's* Sense of it. You suppose he is confessing the insufficiency of Man's *best* personal Righteousness

teousness to Justification. This I grant would sound very well ; it would be a great Expression of Humility and Self-Abasement as to the God Part of them, to acknowledge that after all the Virtuous Attainments, they could not stand Triumphant by the Law of perfect Obedience, but must have Recourse to the *free unbo't Grace of God* for Pardon and Acceptance. But pray, what propriety could there be in acknowledging that the Righteousness of the rest (which was by far the major Part) could not Justify them ? It would be only to say, that those Things could not procure Justification, which deserve the highest Damnation. Certain it is our Understanding the Prophet in the unlimited Sense necessarily runs us into a strange Mixture and Confusion of Characters, putting the most Vicious upon a Par with the most Holy Point of Acceptance with their Maker ; where (Mr. Porter) I trust will allow that the latter (the Merit of their Goodness being entirely excluded) have better Grounds to hope in God than the former, from the merciful Tenour of the Gospel. Tho' I know of *some warm Folks* that have preached it up as a *fundamental Doctrine* of Grace that the most vicious Livers stand fairest for the *special* Grace of God. And when they design to give a Man the worst of Characters, to represent his Case as very Bad and Dangerous, they will call him a *moral Man*. This in their Esteem places him ten Degrees below a Heathen. But *shall we continue in Sin that Grace may abound ?* The apostle rejects this *Antinomian* notion with a more vehement **GOD FORBID**. But 'tis high Time that we proceed to say something to your

3d. *And last* Argument; which is taken from the Term *our* in the Text. And which as you humbly apprehend, and as your *Attestators* have settled the Point, must include the Prophet himself in the Character here drawn; And consequently. the *personal* Righteousness of *One real good Man* at least is stiled *filthy Rags*. One Instance I acknowledge, especially of so good a Man as we all believe the Prophet *Isaiah* was, would be quite sufficient in this Case: And the Point must be given up without any more ado, if it did appear that he here styles *his own* personal Righteousness *filthy Rags*. The Charge moreover of *abuse* in changing *our* into *their* would be very just. But pray gentlemen, isn't it as rational (if you will allow reason to have any Hand in settling the sense of Holy scripture) to suppose the Prophet is here Speaking in a publick Capacity; and that he was (as we commonly phrase it) the Peoples Mouth to God in this humble Confession?

It will be granted I believe that there is such a Thing as *National Guilt*, and that when a Person speaking in this Latitude, and as a publick Representative of the rest in any humble Confession to Almighty God, then I say, he can't word himself better than to say, *Our Sin*, and *Our Guilt* is and so. And if a very righteous holy Minister should thus confess the Sins of this Land, or of England at this Day, could any one rationally infer, that he designed to include himself, and as speaking of his own personal Guilt of every Abomination among them? *I trow not*. Indeed what is more common among some of

the most Pious and Zealous of *Christ's Ambassadors*, when they are publicly confessing the State of this Land, to express themselves to this Purpose *O Lord, we acknowledge OUR greivous Apostacy from the Principles as well as Practices of our pious Forefathers, who for the Purity of Gospel Truth ventured their Lives into this then howling WilderNESS*----- Now when such Gentlemen make *OUR* Apostacy from their Principles, &c. they would not I trust be understood to include themselves as being *personally* guilty of departing from the Faith, which was then *Imported*. For this is the very Thing, even their Zeal for the Faith of the Fathers, that is the ground of their bitter Complaint, about the present decay of it. And no doubt the Prophet made this Confession in our Text, because he was grieved for Transgressors. In the foregoing Words he says, *We are all as an unclean Thing*, (or as some modestly express it, *Sicut Pannus Mulieris Menstruatæ*) But is this the common Character of good Men in Scripture? Of many others vastly less holy than the Prophet 'tis said, *Ye are washed, ye are sanctified*. The Prophet must (unless you would confound good Characters) here personate the Jewish Church and People, and speak in their Names----Take any Instance or two parallel with this in our Text. In the preceeding Chapter 17th Verse, he makes this Confession,---- *Thou hast hardened our (make OUR) Heart from thy Fear*----The Question then is, if the Term *Our* in this Place includes the Prophet himself in common with the rest of that wicked People? If you say *Yes*; I fix you the worst of Characters that is any way

even of the most abandoned Men on Earth, on
 ne of the best of Men then alive. If you say,
 ay ; then I beg to know what Reasons you can
 ve why the Term *Our* should not be equally
 extensive in both these Passages.

Again,

In the 59th Chap. 12th Verse, the Prophet
 introduces the abandoned Character of this People
 with that general Confession,---- *OUR Transgres-*
sions are multiplied-----What these were he pre-
 sently enumerates, such as *Lying, Oppression, Re-*
sult, uttering from the Heart Words of Falshood, &c.
 These the Prophet stiles *our Transgressions* ; but
 arely you and all the World, must have a much
 etter Opinion of this Heavenly good Man than
 o think he was such a Lying, Dishonest Fellow
 he must be, if he is here included in the Term
Our. Nor will it sound very well, to say, his
 heart was hardned from the fear of God *in point*
of Justification. But it must, I think, be quite
 plain to impartial Inquirers, that he calls these
 Villanies *Our Transgressions* in a *National* and not
 in a *Personal* Sense ; and thus Confesseth them to
 God, as the Head and Representative of the Peo-
 ple. For 'tis worthy of our Observation, that
 in a few Words after he speaks of some, whose
 Names were not to be put into this black Cata-
 logue of Vices ; (which yet he calls *Our Trans-*
gressions) of some *who departed from Evil*, and
 hereby *made themselves a Prey*, i. e. become ex-
 posed to the Aspersions and Clamours of the afore-
 mentioned Sinners.

It would be quite endless as well as needless to produce every Instance in the Sacred Writings where the Person speaking uses the Term *Our* in drawing of Characters, that 'tis impossible should be applicable to himself without confounding the Distinctions between Good and Evil, between the Saint and the Sinner. I will therefore only add that for the same Reason the Prophet is here supposed to include himself in the Terms *all* and *one* he must likewise be supposed to include himself in the following Character---- *There is none that calleth upon thy Name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee.* The Text says *NONE*. Was not that Prophet a Man of Prayer? We must therefore understand the Term *None*, under the same Restriction in which we find it necessary to understand a thousand like forms of Speech, if we would make any Sense of Scripture.

THE *Apology* that is made for the Prophet who was a very *consistent* Man, by a *late Verbose, Dark, Jesuitical Writer*, (whose *Patience* always holds out much longer than *that* of his *Readers*) will not be accepted any better than his *Former*, for a Person of a very different Character. For allowing (as we all must) that the *Righteous* are liable to " a sad Decay of Faith and Prayer, What is this to the present purpose? Was the Prophet *Isaiah* at this Time under any such Decay? *I trow not.* He appears all along to be in the full exercise of both; confessing their *National Guilt*; earnestly interceding for this poor *Abandoned People*, and Resolving that *for Zion's sake he would not hold his Peace, and for Jerusalem's*

ms sake take no rest, 'till the Righteousness thereof
 ent forth as Brightness, &c. --- What more pa-
 etick Prayer could the best Saint on Earth make,
 and that in the highest Exercise of GRACE)
 an that in the 1st Verse of this 64th Chap. Ob
 at thou wouldest rent the Heavens, that thou
 oudest come down, that the Mountains might flow
 own at thy presence, &c. If I mistake not, there
 here something like the *actings of Grace* in the
 duty of Prayer, and something of a *stirring up*
 in this holy Man) to take hold of God.

AFTER all, tho' we should grant that the Pro-
 et includes himself in all these Characters; we
 ve this Refuge still in Reserve; that what he
 ys is to be confined to the Place where he De-
 ered it; and the Doctrines of *Palestine* are no
 ore to be receiv'd by us *here*, (tho' Delivered by
 e Inspiration of God) than Oaths taken in *Old*
England, are to be kept in *America*. -----

BUT to return; (Mr. Porter) I have given
 our several Arguments a Distinct and Impartial
 onfideration. And if there is any Thing of
 eight in what has been observed, let it have its
 Right effect; If not, let it receive its just Contempt.

I have only to add,
 3dly. THAT so far as you have any Controversy
 with me, you equally Oppose Calvin himself.
 and upon the Truth of this you will allow me
 the Liberty to expostulate a little with yourself,
 and Reverend Attestators, as to the Cry you have
 sed from the Abuse of the Text, about the
 growth of *Arminianism* amongst us.

It will take up too much Room to recite that CALVIN says in his *Commentary* on this Text, I will therefore only turn you to one or two short Sentences full to the present Point---- To prevent all Disquietudes in pious Minds from this seeming Disparagement of true Righteousness, he says *Hic se nonnulli torquent quod Prophetæ de scelorum inquinamentis loquens sine exceptione Judæos omnes exprimat, in quibus tamen restabant puri Dei cultores; sed frustra. Quia non loquitur singulis, sed de universo corpore, -----* In English thus---Here, there be some that Torment themselves because the Prophet speaking of the defilement Sin takes in and represents the Case of all the Jews without exception, amongst whom there nevertheless remained some pure Worshipers of God; but in vain and without cause (i. e. they are disquieted in vain upon the Account of the Prophet's expressing himself so universally) because he does not here speak of every Individual, but of the whole Body, considered as a Society and Community of Men.--- Presently after he opens more fully still; Says he----- *Hic Locus citari a quibusdam solet ut probent adeo nihil esse meriti in Operibus nostris, coram Deo putidæ & fætidæ sint. Sed hoc manifestè videtur alienum a Prophetæ sententia, &c. &c.* As if he had said; This Place (meaning the 64th of Isaiah 6th.) is wont to be cited by some, that they may prove there is so far from being any thing good and valuable in our Works, that they are in God's Sight noisome and filthy Things. But this appears to me to be very foreign from the Sense of the Prophet, &c.---- Thus speaketh Mr. Calvin. And if these (Mr. Porter,) were Calvin's Sentences

ents with Respect to the Text under Con-
 sideration, might not both you and your *Attestators*
 have lawfully have spared your Cries and Groanes
 about the Abuse of it. Nay, Sir, how could you
 with any face upon *Calvinistick* Principles disclaim
Calvin's own Interpretation of the Words? If I
 have done him Justice in these Quotations, I have
 certainly in settling the Sense of the Text (which
 is all the present Controversy) been quite *Calvi-*
nistical; unless you will suppose that *Calvin* him-
 self was not a *Calvinist*. Surely you had much
 more Reason to have Charged me with Stealing
 my Interpretation from *Calvin* than in the least
 contradicting of him. How shall we account for
 this enormous Blunder in you? I have had vari-
 ous Conjectures in my own Mind about the Mat-
 ter. Sometimes I have Charitably hoped that you
 were not acquainted with *Calvin's* Writings; that
 you had never Consulted him upon the Text, but
 took for grant that he understood all Scripture just
 in the same Sense in which his professed Follow-
 ers now do. And then again (to be honest with
 you) I confess I have not sometimes been with-
 out my Doubts whether or no the Language in
 which *Calvin* wrote might not a little startle you.
 There being some in all Ages, like those in Dr.
Burton's, whom he says, always looked upon *Latin*
 to be the *Language of the Beast*.

SIR, what your Sentiments are in this Respect
 of the Grounds of your thus turning an *Opposer* of
Calvin, I pretend not to determine. Your Excuse
 perhaps may be, *I wot not what I did*. If so, I
 shall Rejoice for your Sake. But however, whe-

ther, Ignorance or Design was at the Bottom of
 (I hope the former,) certain it is that 'tis man
 of Lamentation, and shall be for a Lamentation
that the good old Calvinistical way of opening Te
 is so little. Regarded by his professed Disciple
Alas ! Alas ! that one of his youngest Child
 should rise up at this Day against him, and find
 many elder Brethren to Countenance, Attest, a
 Support this his Disobedience and Rebellion again
 him ; that the Cause of *good old Mr. Calvin* sho
 be so wounded in the House of so many of his b
 Friends.

AFTER all that I have here very openly (and
 trust very honestly) observed relating to *Calvinism*
 I beg both *you* and your *Attestators* to spare me
 Word relating to the Cry you have raised ab
 the Growth of *Arminianism* amongst us. How
 this is true, you are (or ought to be) the b
 Judges, who have publicly Asserted it. But
 fix this Character on any Man, only from his
 interpretation of one single Text, and which at
 same Time he proves to be *Calvinistical*, is I thi
 as Injurious to him as 'tis inconsistent with yo
 selves. *Gentlemen*, you know very well that m
Sounds operate like a Charm on many Min
 “ They confound their Judgment, they infla
 their Passions.” And this can't by any sober M
 be judged the best Method to make them eit
 found Believers or good Livers. What Wond
 have the Terms, *Infidel, Papist, Arminian*, &
 wro't on Vulgar Minds, when artfully played
 against an Antagonist ? How often has Truth be
suppressed and Nonsense established only by

magick of Sounds ? It never did nor never will
 answer any good End in the propagation of Truth,
 load our *Opposers* with Terms of Reproach, and
 endeavour by calling them *hard Names* to lessen
 their Reputation and Usefulness, under a blind
 notion of their being *Hereticks*. Errors when
 apparent ought undoubtedly to be Opposed by all
 that are set for the defence of the Gospel ; But
 how is this to be managed ? Surely not by
 loading the Populace with blind Prejudices against
 them ; but by endeavouring a solid confutation of
 these *Heresies* by bringing Rational and Scriptural
 arguments against them. But if instead of this,
 men think to carry their Cause merely by the Ap-
 plication of a few odious Appellations ; if instead of
 bringing forth their strong Reasonings, they fall to
 railing and Scolding, and calling Names. It is in my
 opinion but a more sly & covert Way of reviling and
 abusing an Opponent. And tho' it be done with
 ever such flaming Zeal for the purity of the Faith,
 and with the highest pretences of Authority from
 Heaven, yet the sober and rational Part of Man-
 kind will ever look upon it as nothing but Phrenzy,
 and a Blasphemous Prostitution of the Name of
 God, to countenance our unsanctified Spleen a-
 gainst others, and give a currency to our own
 senseless Divinity among the thoughtless Multitude.

As we are all agreed in the divine Right of
 private Judgment, so ought we to exercise all
 possible Caution least we enslave our own Minds
 to the Minds of our People to any humane Schemes
 and Authorities ; for to teach them to substitute
 the Writings of weak fallible Men, in the Room

of Christ and his Gospel, may perhaps in the End turn out as fatal as substituting our *personal* in the *Room of Christ's surety Righteousness*.

But 'tis Time to have done; having already vastly exceeded the length I at first proposed in this Letter----Mr. *Porter*, I have stated (as well as I could) the Point in Controversy. I have particularly considered your Arguments and endeavoured to Point out the weakness of them. I have entered and prosecuted my Complaint against you and your *Attestators*, for raising a Cry about the Growth of *Arminianism*, when I have proved myself entirely *Calvinistical* in my *Sense* of the Text; which as I observed before, is the whole of the present Controversy. As for your last Discourse about the Merit of our Goodness Righteousness, I say again, what I intimated before, that I never thought, believed or preached a Thing of this, but always the direct contrary Doctrine. And if you bring the Charge I shall expect you Support it with good Arguments; if not with good *Attestators*.

WHATEVER your Apprehensions or the Sentiments of others may be relating to the Doctrine of Merit, Justification, &c. I assure you, I always preach up (what I firmly believe) that the Grace of God is the Original Spring of all his Creatures Happiness, and that there is no such Thing as Buying, Purchasing or Meriting this Grace at any Hands. But that 'tis *Free and Rich Grace*. *Free* I mean, 'tis the Essential Disposition of Deity to be good. By *Rich* I mean, the

with the Sacred Writer ; that he is good to *All*,
 and that his tender Mercies are over *All* his
 Works. I tell my People indeed, that they must do
 those things that are commanded in the Gospel ;
 which is the Law of Life to us. But am careful
 the same time to add----that when they have
 one all they are to look for Eternal Life as the
 GIFT of GOD, thro' *Jesus Christ*.

SUFFER me now to Conclude all with a few
 short Extracts from the Writings of a *precious*
Minister of Jesus Christ, now with the Lord.
 Some Men (*says he*) seem to be so afraid of
 the *Merit* of Obedience and good Works, that
 they loath to Assert the Necessity of them, and
 do it with so much Caution as if they were not
 tho'roly perswaded of it, or did apprehend some
 dangerous Consequence from it. But this Fear
 is perfectly groundless ; as if *Merit* could not
 be excluded, without casting off our Duty, and
 reclaiming our selves from any necessary Obli-
 gations to be good.----

In another Place he says ;

" I have been more careful to express these
 Things (i. e. such as Relate to Grace, Faith
 and personal Obedience) more fully and dis-
 tinctly, that no Man may imagine, that whilst
 we assert the necessity of Obedience and a holy
 Life we have any design in the least to dero-
 gate from the Faith and Grace of God, but
 only to engage and encourage Men to Holiness
 and a good Life, by convincing them of the
 absolute indispensable Necessity of it, in order to
 Eternal Salvation. For all that I have said is
 " in

“ in plain *English* no more than this, that its ne-
 “ cessary for a Man to be a good Man that he
 “ may get to Heaven. * And whoever finds fault
 “ with this Doctrine, finds fault with the Gospel
 “ it self, and the main End and Design of the
 “ Grace of God therein revealed to Mankind
 “ which offers Salvation upon no other Terms--
 “ And to preach and press this Doctrine is cer-
 “ tainly, if any thing in the World can be so, to
 “ pursue the great End and Design of the Christian
 “ Religion ”---

In another Place he says ;

“ I know it hath been the great End and Design
 “ of the Devil and his Instruments in all Ages to
 “ undermine Religion, by making an unhappy
 “ Separation and Divorce between Godliness and
 “ Morality, between Faith, and the Virtues of a
 “ good Life, and by this means not only to weaken
 “ and abase, but even wholly to destroy the Force
 “ and Efficacy of the Christian Religion, and to
 “ leave Men as much under the Power of the
 “ Devil and their Lust, as if there was no such
 “ thing as Christianity in the World. But let us
 “ not deceive ourselves ; this always was Reli-
 “ gion, and the Condition of our Acceptance with
 “ God, to endeavour to be like God in Purity
 “ and Holiness, in Justice and Righteousness, in
 “ Mercy and Goodness, *to cease to do evil, and*
 “ *to learn to do well*---

In another Place he says ;

“ There are many Persons in the World very
 “ Sollicitous about an Orthodox Belief, and mightily
 “ concerned to know what the Scriptures, but
 “ especially what the Councils and Fathers have
 “ declared

declared in such a Matter ; and they are nice and scrupulous in these Things even to the utmost Punctilio's, and will with a most unchristian Passion contend for the Christian Faith"—

But as he observes in another Place still ;
 " When all is done and said, there is no such Error and Heresy, nothing so fundamentally Opposite to Religion as a Wicked Life. "

Thus he.

Dear Sir, I presume not to Subscribe my self according to *Old Style*) your Brother in the Faith and Fellowship of the Gospel ; for fear you should imagine I have not Faith eno' for any Fellowship. But you will allow me, I trust, the Privilege of a *Heathen*, (*if sound and serious*) to declare,

I am

Your fellow Creature,

And Hearty Well-Wisher,

*Wintree, May 22.
 1750.*

Lemuel Briant.

ALFRED, Esq.

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 10th inst. in relation to the matter of the estate of the late John A. Smith, deceased. I am sorry to hear of the death of your friend and neighbor, and am sure that his death will be a great loss to the community. I have no objection to your making such use of the facts of his life as you may think proper, and I am sure that your account of him will be a valuable contribution to the history of the town.

I am, Sir, very respectfully,
Your obedient servant,
J. H. Smith

20 JUL 63

John A. Smith, Esq.

John A. Smith, Esq.

John A. Smith, Esq.